

A

Strange, but true RELATION Of the Discovery of a most horrid and bloody MURDER,

Committed on the Body of a Traveller about Thirty years ago in the W E S T of *England*; and also how the Skull of the said murdered person was lately taken up with a Linnen Cap thereon, all whole, except that part onely which was under the Letters, which was mouldred away, the Letters remaining firm, being made with silk; taken from the mouth of a civil person that lived very near the place where this fact was committed; and came to Town on Fryday night last, being the 4th of this instant *Jan. 1674.* and both saw and handled the said Skul and Cap. The said party spoke also with the Man to whom the Spirit appeared, that he ordered him to divulge this Murder, and directed him where to find mony to prosecute the offenders. Together with the Confession of the persons now in Custody: and many other remarkable circumstances.

Here is also an account of an Apparition to a certain person, that was made Executor of a Will, to a Gentleman of a good Estate, with power to dispose of the Lands to the use and benefit of his Children, the Gentleman being dead, this Executor fraudulently conveyed the Estate to the use of himself and his Children, but was afterwards so terrified by this Apparition, that he could not rest till he made full restitution to the right Heirs.

The truth of this is attested by several Godly Ministers, that were spectators of the passage, for the conversion of unchristian.

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A strange Discovery of a most horrid and bloody Murder.

The grand Concernments of Religion, and Interests of Mankinde, as to their future estate, depending upon the belief of Invisible Powers, and things not perceptible by the outward Senses, and the unbelief of which, by the Sensualists of these times, being rationally to be supposed the chief ground of all that Looseness and Debauchery that reigns amongst us, to the disparagement of our Christian Profession, it cannot but be an useful undertaking to convince such Sadduces (if at least they will not, upon the most undeniable proofs, suffer convictions of it) of the reality of those things which they would corillously seem to deny; and of such instances there are not wanting many of late time and yet fresh in memory, of which I here present you with one which was testified by several godly Ministers and others, that were Spectators and Witnesses of the passage of an Apparition not long since seen: the Account whereof in short is thus.

About six years since, a Gentleman, owner of

874 A.M.C. for Benefit : volume I

[2] John Smith Esq; had occasioned
a very fair Estate, being a Widower, and Father
of several Children, fell sick, and in the time
of his sickness made his Will, by which he settled
and disposed of his Lands to the use of his Chil-
dren; and thereof made a Kinsman of his Exe-
cutor, with power to dispose of the Lands for
the use and benefit of his Children, according
to the Will; and having so settled his Estate, he
soon after died.

After his death, his Kinsman (the Executor) conceals the Will, and fraudelently makes a conveyance of the Estate to the use of himself and his own Children; and thereby violates his Trust, and dis-inherits the Orphans of their Pa-
trimony.

But rather than such wickedness should die undiscovered, it pleased God by an unusual Providence to detect it: the passage thus:

This Kinsman (of the deceased Gentleman keeping a Farm in his hands, sent his Servants one morning to plough in a field not far from his house; where they had not been long but they were surprized with a very great noise of a company of Huntsmen that were following the Chase after a pack of Dogs, which ran hard by them, (the other on horse-back close following them) and one of the horse-men coming within view, was plainly discovered to be the Gentleman (who in his life-time was much given to that sport) that was lately dead: They had not past far from them, but on a sudden vanished.

The men in a sore affright leave their work
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hereupon, and came home to their Master to acquaint him with what they had seen.

He seems not to believe them, laughs at their folly, (as he call'd it) and chides them for their idleness in leaving their work upon such vain presences.

The next day going to work again in the same place, the same Apparition appeared to them again, of following a Pack of Hounds, and crossing the Lands just by their Plough, took his course directly to their Master's house, and there seemed to enter, and so lost the sight of him.

This confirmed them in their belief of the former Passage; and at their return from work they again acquaint their Master with what they had seen, who still seemed to slight the account of it as an idle story.

Notwithstanding, that night all the Family were affrighted with hideous Noises, Skreekin's, Howlings, clattering together of the Pewter dishes, throwing to of the doors, &c.

This continued for several days together, insomuch that it being taken notice of, and noised abroad amongst the Neighbours, the Gentleman is advised to take council of some Minister what to do to be rid of so great a disturbance.

The Ministers advise him to set apart a day for Fasting and Prayer, (in which they promised their assistance) to seek to God for help for him.

This course was agreed to, and several days

were thus religiously spent to no purpose; for the disturbance still continued as before.

The last day the Ministers met together on this occasion, was kept very solemnly from morning to night. At the conclusion of the day a Minister concluding with Prayer, did particularly insist in his Petitions, that God would please some way to signify the cause of so unusual a Judgement upon that Family; which he enlarged upon with earnestness: And the same person, it seems, not only was acquainted with the deceased person, but had some suspicion of that which was the ground of the disturbance.

While he continued thus in Prayer, on a sudden there appeared to him, and others that knew him in his life-time, at the farther end of the room where they were met, the Apparition of the aforesaid deceased Gentleman, who beckned with his hand to the aforesaid minister then praying, as 'twere inviting him to come and speak with him. Which the Minister accordingly did (breaking off from the duty) recommending himself to the divine protection, and desiring the Prayers of those present, went towards the place where the Spirit stood, which being in a large Room, was at some distance from the rest of the people there met; and drawing neer towards him, the Apparition drew back into an Entry, and beckned still with his hand to the Minister to follow him, which he did: and there the Spirit declared to him, *That the cause of his appearance was not to trouble him or his Brethren, or any person there; for they were Servants of God; but that he came from the other world to acquaint them of the wickedness of the person that had violated his Trust and wronged his Orphans, by taking away the Estate he had left them, to his own wife.* And to confirm the truth of it, told them, *In such a Room in the house they should finde in a certain Chest the Will and other Writings to pass away the Estate;* and bid him tell his Brethren, *That*

That if he did not suddenly make Restitution, he would come and tear him in pieces: Which he uttered with a terrible Voice, and then vanish'd.

The Minister returns with this account to the place, acquaints the Company with it, requires to have the place searched where the Spirit acquainted him the Writings were: which done, they finde the Will cancelled, and the Conveyance whereby the Estate was conveyed, contrary to the Contents of it: which being discovered, and thereby the Ministers and the rest of the company fully satisfied what the ground of this unusual Judgement was, they presently urged it upon the Conscience of him that had by his wickedness been thus the disturber of his Family: Who being thus openly as well as inwardly convinced of his sin, presently fell down on his knees, and with many tears begged pardon of God, and their Praysrs for him, promising speedy Restitution, and to settle the Estate as it was first intended by the Will: which in a little time he accordingly did, and from that night the disturbance ceased.

Another Passage of a more modern notice, is that curiously known of the Discovery of a Morther done 30 years since at an Inne in a City in the West of England, where in digging upon some occasion, was found the Skull of a man and some of his bones, the flesh being all mouldred to dust: On the fore part of his Skull was discovered a piece of Linnen of a Cap, mark'd with two Letters very conspicuous: which Letters upon enquiry were found to answer the Name of a person that formerly kept the house: but although all look'd upon it as a strange providence, that just that part of the Linnen should escape the corruption that had destroy'd the other, with the Marks on it, yet they could not at present tell what to conclude upon it. But a Neighbour present took the Skull and piece of Linnen, which with the Marks upon it conjectured facile to this day.

Not long since a stranger coming to live in the said house, the house has been much disturbed with strange Noises and Ap-

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partitions, to the great affrightment of the people in it : And about five or six weeks after, the Master of the house being in bed and broad awake, a Spirit or Apparition, in the habit of a Gentleman in a genteel dress, appears to him, and drawing aside the Curtain looks him full in the face, and speaks to him to this effect.

That about Thirty years since, he was murdered in that house for his money : that part of his body had been found, but his blood not yet revenged : And charging him to acquaint the Magistrate with it that it might be executed, presently vanished.

The man perplext and fearful, conceals this passage for two or three days, and then the Spirit appears to him again, and with an angry and terrible voice demands, *Why he had not performed his Charge ?* The other trembling replies, *He was poor, and it would be chargeable to prosecute the business.* But the Spirit acquaines him, there should not want money, for that there was Eighty pound hidde[n] in his Kitchin. But the man again urging that he should want Witness to prove the fact, without sufficiency of which, it would be dangerous for him to prosecute any ; the Spirit tells him, *It's a God-ordain'd witness up Witness ; and neither than fail, that he (the Spirit) himself will appear and force the Murderer to confess his amiss in his*

The man the next day digs in his Kitchin according to the Spirits direction, but finds nothing ; and thereby taking the former circumstances for a delusion, conceals the passages : But suddenly after being taken with sickness, sends for a Minister, and amongst other things, imparted these passages to him, and presently after recovering, went and made Oath of the same before a Magistrate.

Two women that had been Servants to the person that had formerly kept that house (who died some years since) upon the rumour of these passages, were examined by the Neighbours about it ; and one of them confess'd, That she knew something of it ; but being brought before a Magistrate, through fear, denied what she had confess'd, and was presently after taken sick and died.

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The other woman upon her Examination attested, That about Thirty years since a Gentleman lately arriving from beyond the Seas came to that Inn; and by the weight of his Cloak-bag was supposed to have good store of money, and she waiting on him in his Chamber, expected to have a good reward: but being the next morning more early than ordinary sent out to Milking, when she came back askt the Ostler if the Gentleman were gone? who told her no he was but walkt into the Town, for there was his Horse; and farther said, that she found his Cloak upon the Bed, but never heard what became of the Gentleman, nor how the Horse was disposed of, but thinks he was cried and sold, and that she had been since that time, very much troubled in her mind to think what should become of the Man.

By a later account in a Letter, it is reported, that since the first digging, there being two Kitchens in the house, Order was given to dig in the old Kitchin, and there was found the money mentioned by the spirit at his last appearance.

There are several persons now under Examination about the fact, by which means so strangely brought about, and by the vigilant care of the Magistrates in the business, 'tis hoped that this concealed Murder will be by the due course of judgment of God in time discovered.

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The two women were left alone in the room. The woman who had been holding the child spoke again. "I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't mean to scare you. I just wanted to make sure you were safe." She reached out and touched the woman's shoulder. "It's okay," the woman said. "I understand. I just... I just don't know what to do."

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